

Faith & Inspiration

From Endings to New Beginnings



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By Vincent V. Marshburn -

Death can be quite an unhappy, unfortunate, and unsettling occurrence. It can also seem somewhat contradictory, as some are moved to cast it in a light of repose, release, or even rebirth. In truth, many people, even Christians, may tend to regard death with a mixture of emotions, including varying degrees of relief, expectation, and awe, as well as uncertainty, apprehension, and foreboding.

On the one hand, death can be framed as a normal part and end of life (Ecclesiastes 7:2, Hebrews 9:27); at the same time, we often experience a sense of grief and loss. Death can even engender outrage, especially when it occurs in what we may perceive as an untimely or senseless manner.

Remarkably, following humanity's fall, against all odds and logic, death would become the vehicle by which redemption would be delivered. All throughout the Old Testament we observe symbolic and prophetic reference to the ultimate expiatory sacrifice. In Jesus, the threat and tragedy of death becomes the pathway and promise of renewal and reconciliation. For the believer then, death, as we know and observe it, is not necessarily the end of existence, but rather a transition and transformation.

The Bible presents some rather paradoxical, even perplexing perspectives on death as a concept, especially in matters of spiritual substance. We have the understanding that there is indeed a death — that is, total spiritual separation from God — directly resulting from the original sin (Romans 5:12). Additionally, the Apostle Paul describes the overwhelming awareness of our sin by virtue of the Law as a kind of "living death" (Romans 7:9). The Law itself does not lead to life — it mainly emphasizes

the reality and severity of the wages of sin (Romans 6:23).

Elsewhere in Scripture, the notion of death illustrates the principle of spiritual rebirth and regeneration. For instance, we are told that that we should execute our old self and sinful nature (Colossians 3:3, Romans 6:11, Galatians 5:24); that in Christ we are a newly created being, that the old has passed away (2 Corinthians 5:17); that we are crucified with Christ (Galatians 2:20) and that we should bear our "cross" (burden of sacrificial death), even daily (Matthew 10:38, 16:24; Mark 8:34; Luke 9:23, 14:27).

The cross and crucifixion present rather harsh, grisly, even morbid imagery that further underscores the desolate quality of death. In this context, though, the Bible is exhorting us to view death as a means of metamorphosis, putting to rest our self-obsessed personas which rebel against God's own aspirations for our well-being. Unsurprisingly, there are many of us who struggle with such a conversion. Indeed, it is often difficult

to leave the "old life" behind.

In an episode of the "Star Trek: Voyager" television series, an unknown alien seeks sanctuary aboard the titular starship. She claims to be an individual named Lyndsay Ballard, a claim which is greeted with shock and skepticism, since a human crew member of Voyager with that name was killed three years ago during a hostile encounter with other aliens known as Hirogen. The alien claiming to be Ballard makes an appeal to Captain Kathryn Janeway and especially to Ensign Harry Kim, who was a close friend.

A medical examination determines that the alien does in fact possess some traces of DNA which matches that of the previously presumed dead Ballard. A kind of reunion ensues among the crew, and Kim in particular re-connects with her on an emotional level.

It turns out that following the human Ballard's death and burial in space, a group of aliens known as Kobali retrieved her body. The Kobali regularly re-animate the deceased

who have been left behind by other species, altering the DNA to conform to the original Kobali pattern. This is in fact their unique form of reproduction. Individuals who are revived in such a manner undergo physiological and psychological conditioning intended to stabilize their new identity as Kobali, including new names and new families to help their immersion in a new culture.

However, some newly re-animated Kobali retain fragmented memories of their former lives, as is the case with Ballard. This was the catalyst for her desire to return to Voyager. However, while she does her best to re-acclimate to life aboard Voyager — even opting for cosmetic alteration to resemble a human again — Ballard finds that her Kobali traits periodically resurface. She readily reverts to the Kobali language during conversations; she conceptualizes advanced physics from a Kobali perspective; and even her Kobali physiognomy attempts to reassert itself.

Soon, the Kobali family who adopted Ballard in her non-human form confront the crew of Voyager, demanding they return her to them. Ballard's adoptive father, Q'ret, pleads with Ballard to return "home."

**Q'RET:** *It's good to see you, Jhet'leya.*  
**BALLARD:** *My name is Lyndsay.*  
**Q'RET:** *Why did you leave us?*  
**BALLARD:** *I wanted to be with my people again.*  
**Q'RET:** *These people? The same ones who set you adrift in space?*  
**JANEWAY:** *We jettisoned her body in accordance with our customs.*  
**Q'RET:** *You abandoned her.*  
**KIM:** *You had no right to tamper with her remains.*  
**Q'RET:** *We were acting*

*in accordance with our customs.*  
**KIM:** *You mutilated her.*  
**Q'RET:** *The reanimation process usually results in extensive memory loss, which makes the transition less painful. Unfortunately, some remember their former lives more than others. Jhet'leya, for example.*  
**BALLARD:** *I told you to call me —*  
**Q'RET:** *Lyndsay Ballard. She's dead. She has been for three years. Forgive me for being so blunt, but when we found her, she was a lifeless corpse. We salvaged that raw material to create a new person, my daughter, whom I love.*

By the end of the episode, Lindsay — or Jhet'leya — realizes that although she retains many of her original qualities, many aspects of her being have been so fundamentally transformed that she must admit she is, in fact, a new person. Jhet'leya concedes that, at this point in her history, she does in fact belong now with the Kobali, her new life.

There are many who find comfort in the belief that, according to Scripture, death does not need to be the end of our story. Even if one were to conclude, as some do, that Satan intended to wreak havoc among God's good creation through the cruelty and disruption caused by death, the Lord has seen fit to use it for his own good purpose.

The believer knows that as the resurrection of Jesus demonstrates, death has been superseded by the new life promised by faith in him. Sin itself can be put to death, so that we ourselves need not be among the "living dead." Death has lost its potency over our lives (1 Corinthians 15:55), and in the end, will be forever eradicated (Revelation 20:14).

TRUMP FROM 5A -

falsehoods about Trump's past. There was nary a positive word spoken about Trump.

"I don't think Donald Trump understands how basic economics works." -Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez

Now the worm has turned for Trump after four years of radical progressive engineering and "Bidenomics." He defied two brutal assassination attempts, two impeachments, a bogus criminal conviction and countless efforts to discredit his character in his winning comeback in 2024.

Today, executives are bending policies and taking a proverbial knee in his direction, reworking their social and environmental protocols in ways that will gain grace with Trump. Major media appears to be trying to tone down the rhetoric and be less antagonistic with their coverage. The Democrats, with a less active place at the table, are waiting to see what plays out before they make their move.

Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg cited his political shift rightward

and said it is important to start off on the right foot with the Trump administration. Yes, this is the same person who censored posts concerning Trump last election. Meta announced it was terminating their fact-checking program and replacing it with a community-driven system similar to the one Trump ally Elon Musk X uses. And Zuckerberg boasted his company was relocating his moderators from liberal California to Texas.

At a recent news conference, Trump said, "The first term everybody was fighting me. This term everybody wants to be my friend." This is not an overstatement, but the contrast between the way his first presidential term began and ended and the current transition to his second term.

President Trump's inaugural committee has smashed fundraising records, racking up more than \$200 million in pledges. Donations have come from some of the world's biggest companies, and top tech CEOs will be front and center at the festivities: Amazon: \$1 million; Meta: \$1 million; Uber: \$1 million; Google: \$1

million; Microsoft: \$1 million; Ripple Cryptocurrency: \$5 million; Toyota: \$1 million; Uber CEO Dara Khosrowshahi: \$1 million; Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg: \$1 million; AI CEO Sam Altman: \$1 million; and Apple CEO Tim Cook, \$1 million; a record high for any Republican.

"Today, it is not big business that we have to fear. It is big government." - Wendell Phillips

Trump broadened his appeal with many groups of voters since his 2020 defeat. The left's four years of bashing and public scorning of him just kept him in the news, which vastly increased his popularity. He has made significant gains in support from independents and moderate Democrats.

"The most fundamental fact about the ideas of the political left is they do not work." - Thomas Sowell

Trump's most remarkable gain has come from Blacks and Hispanics. Latino and Black voters took a right turn in an election dominated by voter outrage over the high cost of food and housing. Juan

Proaño, CEO of LULAC, the nation's oldest civil rights organization for Hispanic Americans, said, "The election results make it clear Trump's messaging on the economy resonated with Latinos."

Black voters have played follow the leader for decades and voted for Democrats, but that has been trending differently the past few years and peeked this election. According to Edison Research, with the economy in limbo, Black men opted for Trump by 21%, while Black women backed him at 7%, with 12% of Black supporters voting for him overall. That is up from 8% from his 2020 presidential bid.

DaSean Gallishaw, a voter consultant in Fairfax, Virginia, said "It's been a very long time since the Democrats ever really kept their promises on what they're going to do for the minority groups."

One Republican operative close to Trump's circle said it's clear that this time around Democratic response is "100% different" from what it was after Trump's 2016 win. "The resistance is dead, there is no resistance right now.

After four long years of progressive leadership, many of Trump's former foes welcome Donald Trump as the right person to lead our nation back into prosperity."

Even Democrats who were working in Washington during Trump's last transition say something very different is happening now. They believe Democrats will be more likely to work with Trump and his allies on important legislation such as the the Laken Riley Act serving as an early example.

"I think it is time that we treat Donald Trump like a regular president." - Chuck Schumer

With a Republican majority Senate and House, Trump will be able to make some major legislative changes, especially when it comes to taxes and regulations. And as head of the executive branch, he will be in a position to act unilaterally on a host of other issues using the limits of his presidential powers.

Analyzing the polling, Americans overwhelmingly agreed with Trump's hard-line immigration stand, his views on national

security, safety in our communities and most importantly the economy.

After four years of progressive leadership that brought us record high inflation, high prices at the pump and raised the cost of living for each American an average of 20%, voters wanted "change they could believe in.: They feared a vote for Harris would bring them another four long years of "Bidenomics," and turned right. Considering Trump's record before the pandemic during his first term in office, voting to bring him back for another four years was a "no-brainer" for most voters.

With a popular president, we have a chance to end the great political divide and accomplish great things for America. "It is time to remember that old wisdom our soldiers will never forget: that whether we are Black or brown or white, we all bleed the same red blood of patriots, we all enjoy the same glorious freedoms, and we all salute the same great American Flag." - Donald Trump.



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